

Info

Graphics

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An Alliance in Trouble? Turkey and NATO in 2025

TURKEY AND NATO

AN ALLIANCE IN TROUBLE?

Turkey became a NATO member in 1952 .

Throughout the Cold War, Turkey was a **crucial ally** in NATO's **southern flank**, controlling the Soviet Union's access to the Mediterranean via the Black Sea and Turkish Straits. Turkey was also seen as an important element for **limiting Soviet influence in the Middle East**.

Turkey has contributed to every NATO mission since the 1990s. But relations between Turkey and its NATO allies started to fray at the edges after the start of the **civil war in Syria** in 2012 and have **deteriorated further since 2015**.

When the Cold War ended, some argued that Turkey was no longer a key ally. But with the wars in the **Balkans throughout the 1990s** and the **war in Afghanistan after 9/11**, the allies once again perceived Turkey to be an **important asset**.

There are **THREE** main issues of contention between Turkey and its NATO allies since 2015.

- 1** The different threat assessments regarding the war in Syria.
- 2** The decision by Turkey to purchase Russian-made S-400 SAM systems in early 2017.
- 3** "Democratic backsliding" or the increasing authoritarian tendencies in Turkey.

Another potential problem: In November 2019, Turkey signed an exclusive economic zone (EEZ) agreement with Libya in the Eastern Mediterranean disputed by Greece (a NATO ally) and Cyprus and challenged by the EU.



TURKEY AND NATO

THE DELPHI METHOD

A half-day workshop, held at Carleton University on March 3, 2020 with representatives from DND, GAC, CF, as well as scholars from Canada, the US, and Europe explored possible states of the world related to Turkey-NATO relations in the next five years. The workshop used a modified **DELPHI METHOD**.



In the classical application of the Delphi method, experts individually make estimations and provide a rationale for their answers.



The experts are then asked to reflect on the rationales submitted by other experts, after which they are invited to revise their estimations.



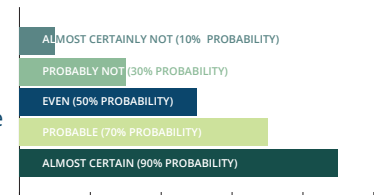
This (estimate-deliberate-estimate) cycle continues until a particular outcome is achieved.

The **MODIFIED DELPHI APPROACH** taken in this workshop was done in two stages: **pre-workshop survey** and the **workshop**.

One week prior to the workshop, the participants anonymously **filled out a survey**, asking them to identify at least one, but no more than three events/developments for each of the following three categories: **existing trends, weak signals, and potential wildcards**.

At the workshop, participants used an **online app** to estimate the likelihood of a trend continuing. After a **discussion of the group's results** participants were invited to submit new responses.

In the second part of the workshop, participants were asked to rate the impact of each discussed trend, weak signal, and wildcard on **Canadian security and defence interests** on a five-point scale (from negative to positive).



TURKEY AND NATO

THREE FUTURES IN 2025

1

MUDDLING THROUGH

The status quo is largely maintained. Turkey and NATO have different security priorities and manage Turkish alienation by pulling it away from Russian security cooperation. Canada has conflict management tools and lack of historical baggage to help NATO navigate these dynamics.

2

BREAK-UP

Tensions increase. Erdogan tightens his domestic grip, and begins to seriously consider NATO withdrawal. Although unlikely, this scenario is more likely than the best-case scenario, requiring only intensification of existing dynamics.

3

RETURN TO THE FOLD

Russian SAMs sit unused, and all areas of tension reverse. In this unlikely scenario, Canada does not have much leverage, but can monitor.



TURKEY AND NATO

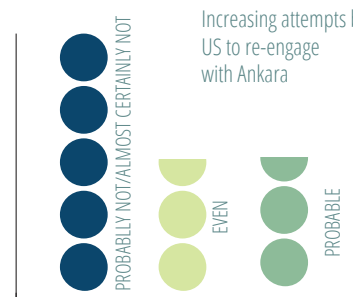
IN THE NEXT FIVE YEARS

TRENDS



WEAK SIGNALS

STRENGTHENING OVER THE NEXT FIVE YEARS



WILDCARDS

ALMOST CERTAINLY NOT



Withdrawal of Turkey from NATO

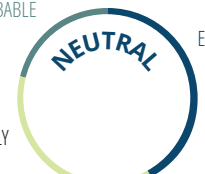
ALMOST CERTAINLY NOT



Resolution of key outstanding issues between the allies

PROBABLE

PROBABLY NOT



Change of leadership in Turkey before 2025

